

# GUIDING LIGHT

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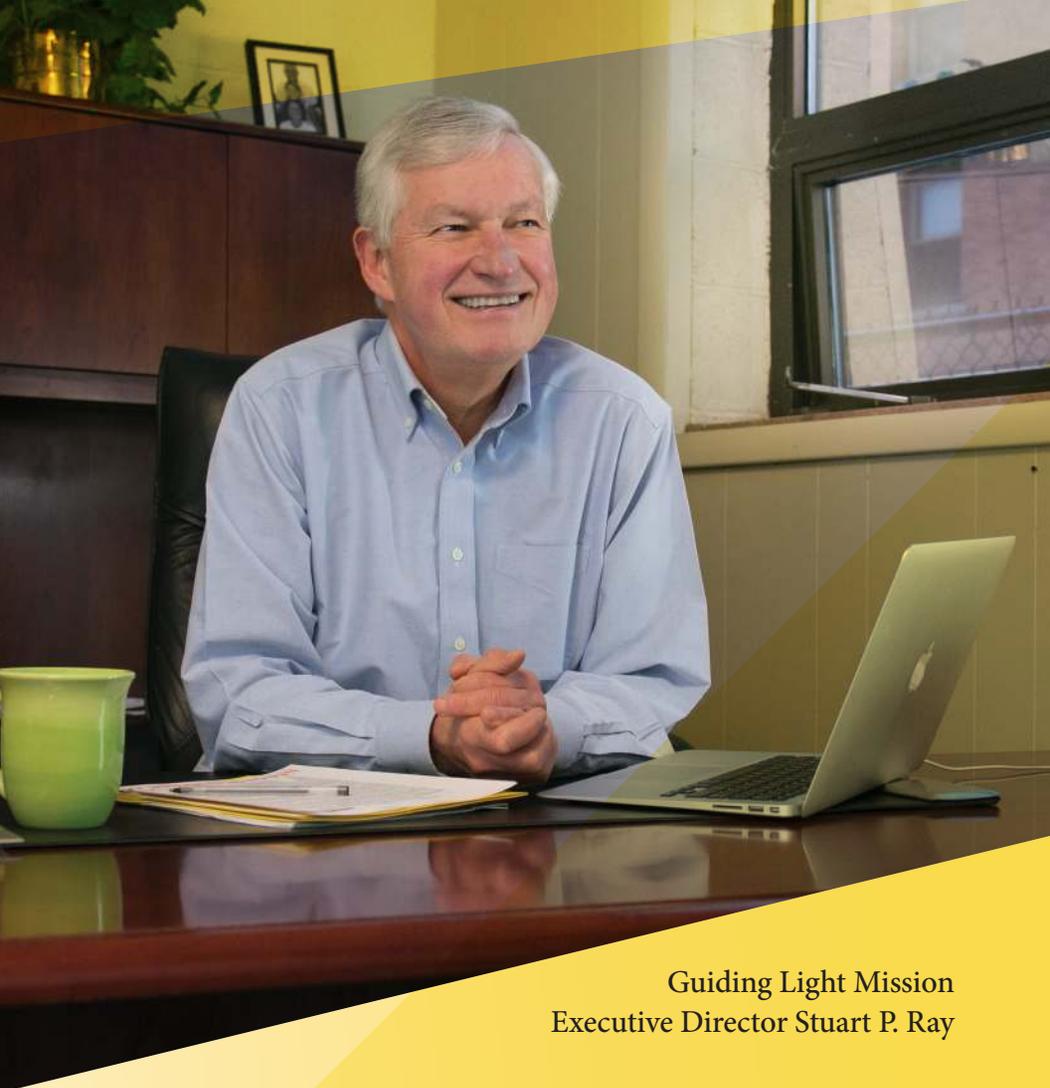
IRON HOUSE

EST 2015

THE JOB POST

NEW TIERS OF  
**OPPORTUNITY**

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Guiding Light Mission  
Executive Director Stuart P. Ray

Many downtown missions were created in the early 1900's to respond to the rising crisis of homelessness in the Grand Rapids area. These Christian organizations met the felt needs of this ailing sector of the community by offering relief of physical and spiritual suffering—they offered beds, food, and sermons to all who had fallen through the cracks of society.

As time progressed, however, it became obvious to Guiding Light that something wasn't right. Simply offering meals and minimal life tools wasn't enough. Offering traditional comforts through traditional methods was restricting recipients from necessary transformation – the very transformation we were trying to effect. The cultural fabric of society was changing, we realized, and it was time to change with it. We began to look at rescue not as the end result but rather the first step.

In order to move forward, we continue to seek out the best methods for transformation. This means narrowing our focus to connecting men with jobs and with programming that ensures successful addiction recovery. These steps have allowed Guiding Light to continue to fulfil our promise to those who so desperately need it. Our founding commitment to the lordship of Jesus Christ informs every decision. Prayerfully, we have modified our programs, expanded the scope of our practice, and looked at the steps in the process for successful faith-based recovery.

As we assist men in re-engaging with our community, we've built several new bridge services to complete the process from program entry to sustained recovery and spiritual maturity. Iron House enhances and underscores our ultimate purpose. The Job Post offers opportunity to all in the community.

Everything we do points men toward new life – abundant life in Jesus Christ. It is this goal that informs every program, every innovation, and every action of Guiding Light. Our job is to exhibit our new lives in Christ in such a way that all are encouraged to enter into it and be forever made whole. We are using every resource we have to accomplish this ultimate goal. It is important for us to make sure people don't miss the forest for the trees, that they don't become satisfied with the methods and forget the motivation.

As we walk the line of rescue, recovery, and re-engagement as a mission and are continually seeking to be renewed in Christ, we are able to offer the same three methods of transformation to the broken, lost, and suffering men of our community.

Your continued investment in this organization will give broken men the choice to surrender and be transformed into new individuals. We can provide the counseling, expectations, shelter, experience, and opportunity. Our Heavenly Father does the rest. I can assure you, there is nothing more rewarding than seeing a life reclaimed, restored and lifted from despair.

Thank you,

*This means that anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun!*

—2 Corinthians 5:17

Stuart P. Ray  
Executive Director  
Guiding Light Mission



# BY THE NUMBERS!

# YOUR DONATIONS GO TO THIS!

FISCAL REPORT SUMMARY FOR 2014 (July 1, 2014 – June 30, 2015)

# 73,595

meals served

*(THAT'S A LOT OF FOOD!)*

# 21,642

overnight stays provided

# 6,133

hours volunteered here by the public and outside professionals totaling approximately \$135,450 in services

# 2,250

small group and individual counseling sessions conducted

# 30

*WAY TO GO, GUYS!*

men completed the rigorous Guiding Light Recovery Program for drug and alcohol rehabilitation

# 208

*AMEN!*

Bible Study classes conducted

# 200

men used our computer lab for online job searches, email, and resume preparation

# 180

men in rescue obtained full-time jobs, established savings accounts and moved into independent housing

# \$4.5 million

With 180 men earning a minimum of \$25,000 per year, this adds up to over \$4.5 million of economic activity per year. Helping Guiding Light Mission makes good business sense too!

*AND TO OUR SUPPORTERS...*

# WE COULD NOT DO THIS WITHOUT YOU!!

*THANKS EVERYBODY!*



## *“So, what is it like here?”*

**Picking up a brochure about our New Life in Christ program will likely tell you the basics. But rather than let the tri-folds do the talking, I sat down with one graduate and three current Guiding Light Mission residents for a candid roundtable discussion of what it’s like to be here. Because this is such a special place, and it’s funded by YOU, we want to share what your generous donations are doing. If you know someone who might benefit from our services, please pass this newsletter along to him!**

**DENNIS THE WRITER:** So what brought you here to Guiding Light Mission?

**JOHN, 26,** program graduate: I actually just graduated the program in June and I’m doing really well. But what led me here last year was family intervention. I started drinking at age 16 and ended up hospitalized for drinking at 19. Even when I first came here, I still wasn’t ready to change, but I was out of options. I didn’t have a manageable life in any sense. That year I made a very serious suicide attempt, which eventually led me here.

**SEAMUS, 23,** 4 months in the program: I never got arrested or anything, I just kept crossing the line. Every time I drank I was looking to cross the line, like I wanted to see how much I could get away with. I even stayed at a cheap hotel for a week, drinking, until I ran out of money. When I walked in the doors here I just said to them, “I have nowhere else to go.” I burned so many bridges that I literally had nowhere else to go.

**TOM, 42,** 7 months in: This is actually my second time here. I graduated the program last year, relapsed, then came back. But I’ve struggled with addiction since I was in my teens. In 2010, after I burned every bridge, I ended up living in a homeless shelter in Ann Arbor. But I got kicked out when I blew numbers (failed a breathalyzer). Someone there told me about this program in Grand Rapids and asked if I’d be interested. I said “yes,” not because I wanted to get sober but because I needed a place to stay.

When I came here I had no expectations, but then my eyes started opening to some things and I actually graduated the program. I went back to Ann Arbor, back to my 22 year old daughter and 17 year old son, but then unfortunately, I relapsed. I went off the deep end and became suicidal. So I called Executive Director Stuart Ray and asked him if I could come back to Guiding Light Mission and try again. He asked me, “What will be different this time?”

I explained to him that I might've coasted the first time. But I wanted to try again, to surrender and get it completely right. I knew I had to do it. I was embarrassed at first but then I saw that everybody here still cared about me.

STAN, 57, 6 months in: I'd been an alcoholic my whole life and it just kept getting worse and worse. I was always a hard worker... but what really put me over the edge was my second divorce about four years ago. She got the house and I just left everything I owned— my clothes, my tools, everything. I hit the streets and bounced from mission to mission, many of which were really terrible. People go in there drunk, fighting, tearing the place up, sleeping on floors, ambulances being called every night... it was terrible and made me realize how bad things could get. So I appreciate Guiding Light Mission a lot. I'm also learning a lot about myself, how to live and regain my self-respect.

### **What were some initial observations upon coming here?**

STAN: At first, we're put in a room with 33 beds. Most of the guys there are in the 30-day Back to Work program. After a week or so, we get assigned a room, with two other roommates. We get a schedule of chores, classes, work therapy assignments, devotionals and readings.

SEAMUS: For the first month, the policy is no phones or Internet. After 30 days, we get those privileges back. But when I first came, they took down all my information, filled out forms and then they gave me a drug test, which I actually didn't pass... so I had to go to a different mission for a little bit... and that was hard. It was not fun. But when I did come back to Guiding Light Mission, it made me realize how special this place is. This is my first time doing any sort of recovery thing and it was a little scary.

### **What's the daily schedule like?**

STAN: We go to nine addiction recovery meetings a week. There I'm meeting people who've been sober for 20 years and they seem happy and healthy. We're required to get a sponsor to coach us through the 12 steps. When new guys come in needing a sponsor, they can simply say to the group, "Hi, I'm new here and I'm looking for a sponsor." And most of the time, four or five sober guys will come up and introduce themselves as a potential sponsor.

JOHN: Yeah, there is no shortage of people who want to help us out. There

is an incredible recovery community in Grand Rapids. There are so many opportunities here for people to treat addictions.

### **How does Guiding Light Mission operate?**

TOM: To keep Guiding Light Mission going, it really is "all hands on deck". It doesn't work to have paid staff do stuff that residents can do. So all the guys staying here help cook the food, do the cleaning and we even take turns doing 24/7 security at the front desk. The paid staff does the development side, the marketing, accounting, intake, counseling... that kind of stuff.

### **Why is the front desk staffed 24/7?**

STAN: The front desk is staffed 24/7 for emergencies and people off the street who need a one-night stay. We also have guys here that work full time, some of them second or third shift and they're coming back at all hours of the night.

### **There are people who have jobs here?**

STAN: Oh sure. The guys in the Back to Work program can stay here for another 60 days after getting a job so they can save up their money to find sustainable housing. Guiding Light Mission makes them save 75% of their paycheck so they can get back on their feet. We sometimes get emergency overnight stays from people off the street. (People from the street are allowed one stay per month, without checking into the program.)

### **What are people like when they first get admitted here?**

JOHN: Most people are pretty quiet and humbled when they get here. When I came in, I was pretty hopeless— I didn't think I would ever stop drinking.

### **Are some guys hopeful and optimistic when they come in here?**

JOHN: Some guys are hopeful but they tend not to last. It's the guys that come in here with a healthy amount of doubt— those guys who are broken and honest are more likely to make it through the program.

### **Really?**

JOHN: Yeah, because the first thing you have to do is admit that your view

of drugs, alcohol and the world is probably wrong. You have to empty yourself of your ideas so that you can refill it with something else. I've seen that's harder to do if you have strong convictions about things.

SEAMUS: Yeah, some guys come in "knowing exactly" what they want to learn... and that narrow view limits them and they leave. It doesn't seem like everyone is willing to stay and learn and grow.

JOHN: Yeah, recovery takes time and requires a unique degree of change. And, if you have no pliability in your beliefs, then that's harder to accomplish. But everybody who comes in is more or less afraid. Most who come here are in really bad shape, some just out of detox, so they're not just physically sick, but everybody in their life is mad at them. All their relationships are crumbling and they have no income. Basically, Guiding Light Mission takes in people who've lost everything and are completely desperate.

**So the men who come here, it's not optimism that brings them?**

JOHN: No, it's desperation. It's out of a desperate need to change.

**So John, you're out of the program now?**

JOHN: Yeah, sort of... I'm in Iron House (an apartment he pays for and shares with other Guiding Light Mission folks who have completed the program and are working full time and paying bills again. Iron House is really cool— we'll feature that again soon!)

**What is it like to lead a class or session here?**

STAN: Everybody gets a chance to lead meetings. To keep this place going, all the recovery residents take turns leading and teaching. I've chaired some meetings, and I've lead something called "As a Man Thinketh". We each take turns picking out a topic. When it's my turn, I head to the computer and research. It's generally a topic that I think others would be interested in too, usually about recovery or forgiveness. I look forward to my turn when I get to lead a class— I actually get pretty excited about it.

JOHN: Yeah, everybody has to pitch in. It's a good opportunity for guys to tell their story and let people get to know them better.

SEAMUS: We do devotionals in the morning too. Fifteen minutes of



SEAMUS PLAYING GUITAR

ROMANS 12:6-8

someone talking about what's on their mind, something spiritual or something that's troubling them. I hated it at first, because I didn't want people to know me. Talking to strangers about "what's bothering me" just wasn't a comfortable thing to do. But once I started getting into it, I realized that my stories were safe here. These people weren't going to judge me. After my first couple times leading devotionals, I started sharing real things instead of faking my way through it.

### **Can someone opt out of leading a devotional?**

JOHN: No, everyone has to do it. It's your duty to share and teach and give back. We can learn something from each person here. It doesn't have to be great, but everyone has to at least try.

### **What's different about Guiding Light Mission vs other missions?**

SEAMUS: In the other missions I've seen there was a lot of chaos and little order. It seemed more like a flophouse and during the day there's this big room where people sit and watch TV all day. After breakfast I asked the person in charge, "Okay, what should I do now?" and they said "You can do whatever you want, just come back later tonight." That wasn't gonna help me! A lot of people there were drunk or high and it just wasn't a good place for me. It was dirty, close quarters, and people sleeping on mats on the floor. Coming here to Guiding Light Mission, people seemed to care. Right away I have people asking me, "What's going on with you? What's your story? How can we help you?" And they gave me clear guidelines to stay in the program. Everything was laid out for me— the classes I was gonna take, the people I'd be working with. It was an eye-opener for me to meet people who wanted to help.

TOM: I've stayed at missions in New York that have 500 beds. Those places were rough. I didn't think I could ever be sober, but hearing other people's stories, other people's situations— it made me realize that I'm not the only one who's screwed up. It makes for a camaraderie here... there's like a brotherhood here.

JOHN: Some people come in and you may not like them at first, but seeing and working with them every day— they become your brother. The closeness here is a big help. Everybody here is working toward the same thing.

### **Is there an openness here to let guys do things their own way?**

SEAMUS: Well, yes and no. Yeah, there are a lot of guidelines here, rules to follow or you'll get written up or kicked out... but they are very open to helping find what works. They listen to people and are responsive. For example, I asked them if I could play guitar or the piano in the dining hall if I ever lost my temper or got stressed. And as long as I followed the rules, did my chores and attended my classes, then I'd be allowed little extras like that.

JOHN: The staff isn't here to make you stumble, they're here to help. When I told them I wanted to meet with a 75-year old woman for spiritual direction every week, they let me do it. They were really supportive.

### **Does Guiding Light Mission encourage you to sever friendships?**

SEAMUS: Guiding Light Mission didn't make me give them up, but I do have friends I don't talk to anymore. Because the recovery here is about our own healing, no one else's. We need to get this taken care of first before we pick up friendships or repair relationships again.

### **What does one need to do to get into Guiding Light Mission?**

STAN: That person would first need to admit they need help. If he's an addict of some kind, then he needs to admit that. That's the first step. And when he comes in, he's given the rundown of what is expected.

TOM: When someone comes to the door, he is given a choice. We ask "are you interested in a one-night stay? Are you interested in finding a job and getting a roof over your head? Do you need help battling addictions?" So he has a choice. If it's just a one-night emergency stay, we'll pull out a mat and they can sleep on the floor in our locker-and-hangout room. If they're not interested in our services, then we might not see them again for a month or so.

### **What is the spiritual component like here?**

JOHN: We do devotionals, prayer groups and Bible classes. This place is very careful about what kind of Christianity is presented. These guys are already broken and beat down, so Guiding Light Mission builds them back up. In my opinion recovery programs need to be careful with theology, because sometimes it can do harm. Some of the most vicious relapses I've seen have been from people who feel that God is endlessly angry at them. There's no hope, so they try to drown the pain. But this place exists because of faith-based convictions.

SEAMUS: I'm Catholic, and I didn't feel comfortable going to the church that everybody else was going to, so after my 30 days, they let me go to the local St. Andrew's Catholic church. I really appreciated that.

I also know that faith can move mountains but you have to be "willing to bring a shovel." This is a lot of hard work. You can't just sit back-- you also need to work hard, study, and create healthy relationships with people who are sober. We talk a lot about making amends with people, as well as forgiving ourselves.

JOHN: Guiding Light Mission brings in some really cool, smart people with Ph.D's that come in and talk about spirituality in regards to our addiction. It's pretty inspiring. There is a great amount of people who come here to help.

**How much does it cost to come here for services?**

JOHN: Nothing. This is a special place. As long as you're serious about change and you abide by the rules, it's free. And it's completely donor funded. Like I said, it's a special place.

**So more or less, this is a place for people who are serious about getting their life together?**

JOHN: Absolutely.



**FROM THE EDITOR:** Thanks for reading these excerpts from our roundtable discussion. We do regret to tell you that Stan (not his real name) left the program. Even though you don't know him, he deserves our respect, love and prayers. Getting back on your feet can be really tough, but this is not the end of Stan's story. We believe that God is working on him in His own way. Please take a moment today to pray for those who stumble, not just those here at Guiding Light Mission, but also those in your own life. As always, if you'd like to talk more about whether Guiding Light Mission is right for someone you know, please call our Intake Coordinator Jeff Courtley at 616-451-0235 ext 25.





BACK TO WORK  
IN 5 DAYS???

“Seriously, Matt?”

“Seriously.”

Since he was 17 years old, Matthew Holmes has been studying poverty and working with those who struggle. He’s been working at Guiding Light Mission for two years, first as Intake Coordinator, for guys inquiring about the mission. Now he heads up the Back to Work program. I sat down with him to find out if the program lives up to its name!

**Dennis Nagelkirk - Interviewer: So what is the Back to Work program?**

Matthew Holmes: It’s a 90-day program where guys can stay here, look for a job, find a job, then save up some money to find a place to live.

**How does one get into the program?**

Well, any guy can walk in and request some help. Jeff Courtley, our Intake Coordinator, will sit down with him and find out exactly what his issue is. Is his issue addiction? Well, we have an extensive program for that. Does he just

need some help to get back on his feet? Well, then maybe the Back to Work program will be good for him. Once we get to know him, we’ll go over what the rules and requirements are— and if he agrees, then he can join in.

**After someone agrees to join the program, then what?**

Then he can sleep here and eat here. We have 39 beds specifically for guys in the Back to Work program. It’s lights out at 10 p.m. and then wakeup is at 6 a.m.

**Is it a gentle wake up? Is it with a bullhorn or a whisper?**

The lights are turned on and someone says “six o’clock”, simple as that. Since it’s one big room, they all make sure everyone wakes up on time. Some guys are hard sleepers and every once in a while someone will sleep through all the commotion, but pretty much everyone wakes up together. They have 45 minutes to wake up, get dressed, get ready, have some coffee and then at 6:45,

I host a little meeting. Since each day the guys are looking for work, I'll follow up with them on their leads for a job. Often I'll read a devotional, an article or any passages of interest— whatever I think might help them out.

At 7 a.m., we all eat breakfast. Afterward, seven or eight of them at a time will have chores scheduled. Someone will take the trash out, someone will clean the showers, that kind of thing. We try to keep it clean around here. After the chores, they do their job searches.

**With society's perception of an unemployed homeless person, is hygiene ever an issue?**

Almost never. These are guys that want to work. They know how to dress nice for an interview and maybe to one out of every twenty guys I'll suggest a haircut and a shave. For the most part, they're very normal guys who've simply fallen on tough times. For most of them, within 90 days, they're working, earning money and renting their own room or apartment.

**That's amazing. How involved are you in their job hunting process?**

I try to empower them as much as I can, so I don't really hold their hand. Each morning I'll hear how the previous day went and track what they're doing that day. I'll typically hear, "I applied at these places yesterday, and today I'm trying these places." Each and every day is wholly geared toward looking for work. I might make a couple of phone calls for them, maybe email my staffing contacts, but for the most part, they're using their own time and the tools to look for the work themselves.

**And how well does that work?**

Most guys have work within five days.

**Seriously? For real? Five days?**

Some guys will even find a job within one day— literally one day. With other guys it might take a couple of weeks. But the average seems to be... that most of these guys find a job within a week.

**Wow, that seems so unreal in our society, especially knowing that people can be out of work for a year. How can that happen?**



They're spending each and every day looking for work, making calls, meeting people and searching for jobs online in our computer lab. If they don't have a car, then we give them bus tickets so they can make appointments, introduce themselves and do interviews. If they're serious about work, it's really that simple.

### **So then once a guy gets a job, then what happens?**

Since it's a 90-day program, getting a job is the first step. It might take a couple of weeks to get a paycheck, but when the money starts rolling in, we have the men put 75% in a savings account. So if someone takes home \$300 in a week, our rule is he puts \$225 in the bank, and then he can have \$75 for the week to spend. We're really strict about the 25% allowance. So ideally, after 60 or more days of saving 75% from each paycheck, he should have around \$1,800, give or take, depending on his income. Saving money while he's here is crucial because the next step is finding sustainable housing.

### **What kinds of jobs are they getting?**

A lot of the jobs are for light industrial work through staffing companies. We also see a lot of factory, restaurant and retail jobs, often in the \$10-\$12/hour range. It's not a ton of money, but if you're careful, it's enough to live on.

### **Do any guys in the Back to Work program struggle with addiction issues?**

Yes, maybe 35% are struggling with addiction, either drugs or alcohol, which might be part of the problem with being unemployed. Obviously, this needs to be a clean and sober facility, so we do random drug testing and breathalyzing for all the guys here. So those who struggle with addiction do face those issues. However, because the Guiding Light Recovery Program is intensely serious, we can't force people to deal with their addictions if they aren't ready to. Often a "functioning alcoholic" isn't ready to admit there's a problem, so they'll join the Back to Work program instead of the Addiction Recovery program. These are guys who've not yet hit rock bottom, but are in danger of having that happen. So I'm not afraid to address that with them. I tell them that if they don't address this issue, it could really ruin them down the road. I'll strongly encourage those guys to go to AA meetings a couple of times a week and maybe get a sponsor.

### **How do you deal with mental health issues?**

When Jeff does the intake interview, it might come out that there is a mental health issue. Many times Pine Rest is a better resource for these individuals than Guiding Light Mission. If it's a situation we're not equipped to handle, we always try to refer to an organization that can help them. We do our very best to have a next step solution for each individual that comes to us.

### **What are some patterns you see from the guys coming in here?**

Well, everybody's situation is different. But there are some things we see a fair amount of. For example, a lot of guys come in here with Friend of the Court issues. They have child support for multiple kids, sometimes up to \$150 - \$200 per week, maybe more. Obviously, guys need to take care of their kids, but for some, a job loss or a health issue can destabilize their living situation pretty quickly. And when they get a job again, it's difficult for them to get back on top.

We also have some guys come in here that are just getting out of jail. They have no money, they might have massive court fines and are trying to start over. For these guys, it can be very difficult to transition back into society.

For others, it might simply be poor decision making— spending money they don't have. So the 25% allowance can be a challenge for some, even though their food and housing is provided. If they go through their 25% pretty quickly (which can sometimes be only \$50 - \$75), that can lead to some good teachable moments. I'll ask "How did you spend all your money?" "Did you really need to purchase that?" "Should you be buying gifts or lending money to someone else?" So their 25% allowance often leads to good conversations about budgeting.

The average guy with no debt issues, who is making between \$8 - \$10 an hour, can usually save about \$2,000 during his 90-day stay. It's a pretty good chunk of change for someone who comes in here penniless and jobless. So that will get them first month's rent and a deposit for a place to live. Someone with debts and financial obligations will maybe save \$750 to \$1,200.

### **What happens if guys go through the program, lose their jobs, and then need another 90-day stay?**

We used to see "repeats", but then we made a rule that this was a one-shot deal, so we don't take any more repeats. When I get that call from

someone who has been through the program before, I'll gladly chat with them, sit down with them, job coach them, refer them, let them use our computers, but we cannot give double services to people by taking them back in the program.

### **Do some people leave the program before the 90 days?**

Oh sure. We have an 80% success rate for guys getting a job, saving money and finding a place in 90 days. A few guys will get a job and leave the program right away or some might move back in with their wives or girlfriends— a few will get a job and then lose it soon after. Now and then we'll get a guy who doesn't try very hard and we'll ask him to leave if he doesn't find a job within 30 days. We can't have them taking up bed space if they're not serious about getting back on their feet. Sometimes we see guys turn down jobs in favor of looking for something better. And that's okay for skilled laborers, but if you keep turning down jobs, then you're not taking this very seriously.

But for the most part, 80% of the guys that come through here are success stories. That's pretty amazing when you think about it. That's a couple hundred more people working, earning a paycheck, and paying into the economy. Their economic health helps everybody's economic health.

### **Where do guys go when they leave the program?**

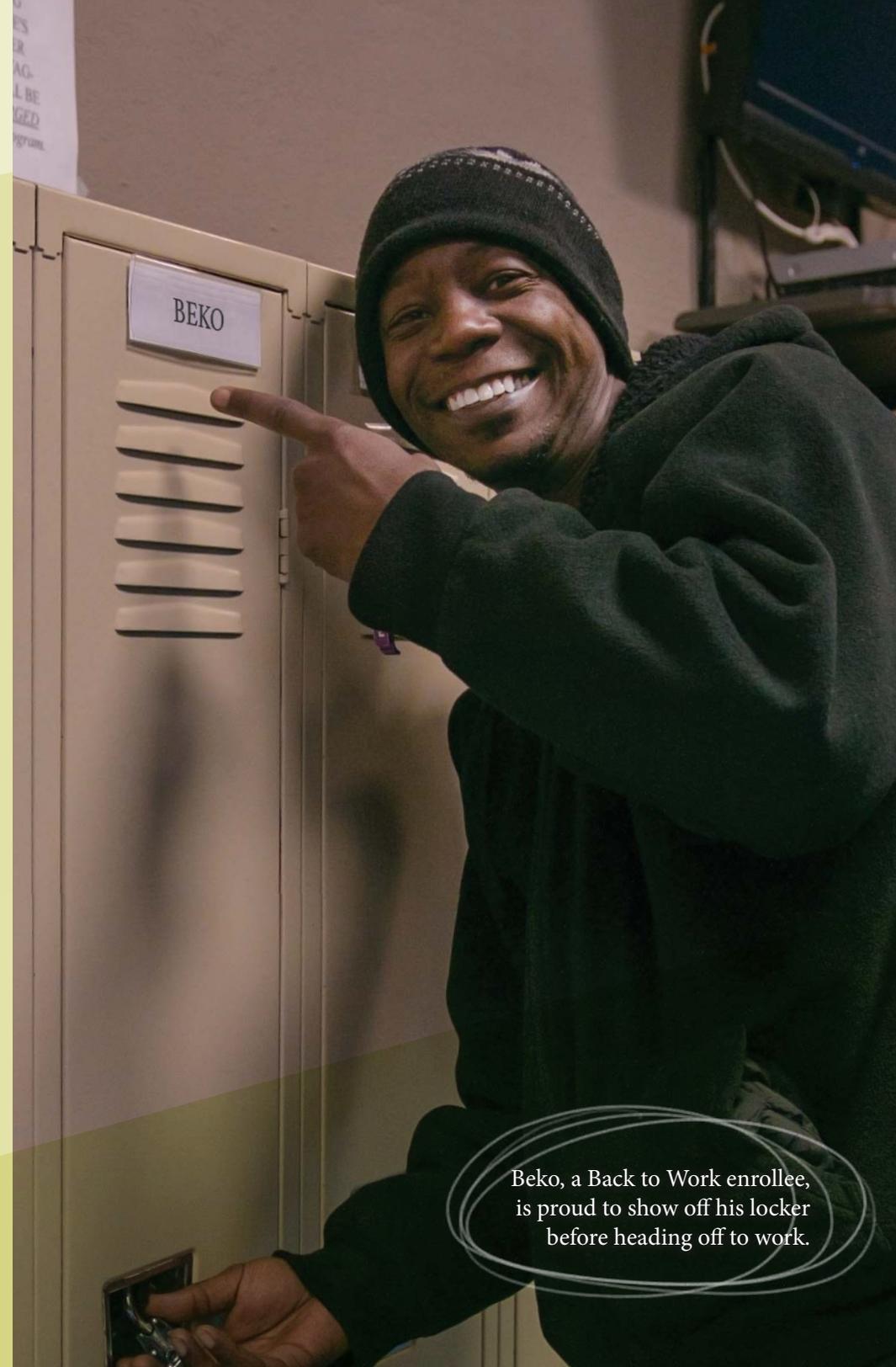
It depends on what they can afford. We encourage them to find a cheap apartment somewhere or rent a room from somebody. Often they'll use Craigslist to make those connections.

### **Do you like your job?**

Yeah, I do. I like working with these guys. This line of work suits me very well. I think I'm good at what I do.



Do you know someone who could use Guiding Light Mission's programs? Give our Intake Coordinator, Jeff Courtley, a call at 616-451-0236, ext. 25.



Beko, a Back to Work enrollee, is proud to show off his locker before heading off to work.

# STRONGER & STRONGER

In 2012, Guiding Light Mission Director Stuart Ray had a bold idea.

“What if we bought an apartment complex?” The question came from a growing concern that the transition from the Guiding Light Recovery Program to complete independence was a big one. One day, a resident would be at the Mission with his hard-working sober friends and the next day he’d be moving out on his own. Some men would love it and feel a sense of accomplishment. However, others were terrified that certain triggers might lead them to repeat their past mistakes. All it takes is one weak moment alone to destroy eight months of hard-earned sobriety.

Mr. Ray pushed hard to make something happen that could serve as a transitional step to independence. “We wanted an apartment that the men could actually pay for, where they’d be held accountable to their friends and neighbors.” Buying something like this would be a big expense for Guiding Light Mission, one that wasn’t in the normal programming budget. But if done right, it could be sustainable and eventually pay for itself.

After looking around and discussing it with the board for over a year, an opportunity presented itself: A four-unit, two-story apartment house in Kentwood was up for sale. It needed work, but the price was right. They made the purchase and teamed up with area contractors and Guiding Light Mission residents to fix it up. Each apartment received new cupboards, carpet and paint. And as each unit was finished, recovery program graduates would opt to rent out a room.

After renovations, each house would hold eight men, with two per



The first Iron House, purchased and renovated in Spring of 2014

apartment and each of them getting their own room. Each resident pays \$400 per month to live there, with heat and electric included. This generates around \$2,400 per month (after the cost of utilities), per house for Guiding Light Mission to make the investment a sustainable venture.

Now, in 2015, Guiding Light Mission has since acquired two more neighboring apartment buildings, bringing the total number of units to 12 and the number of bedrooms to 24.

## BUCKY

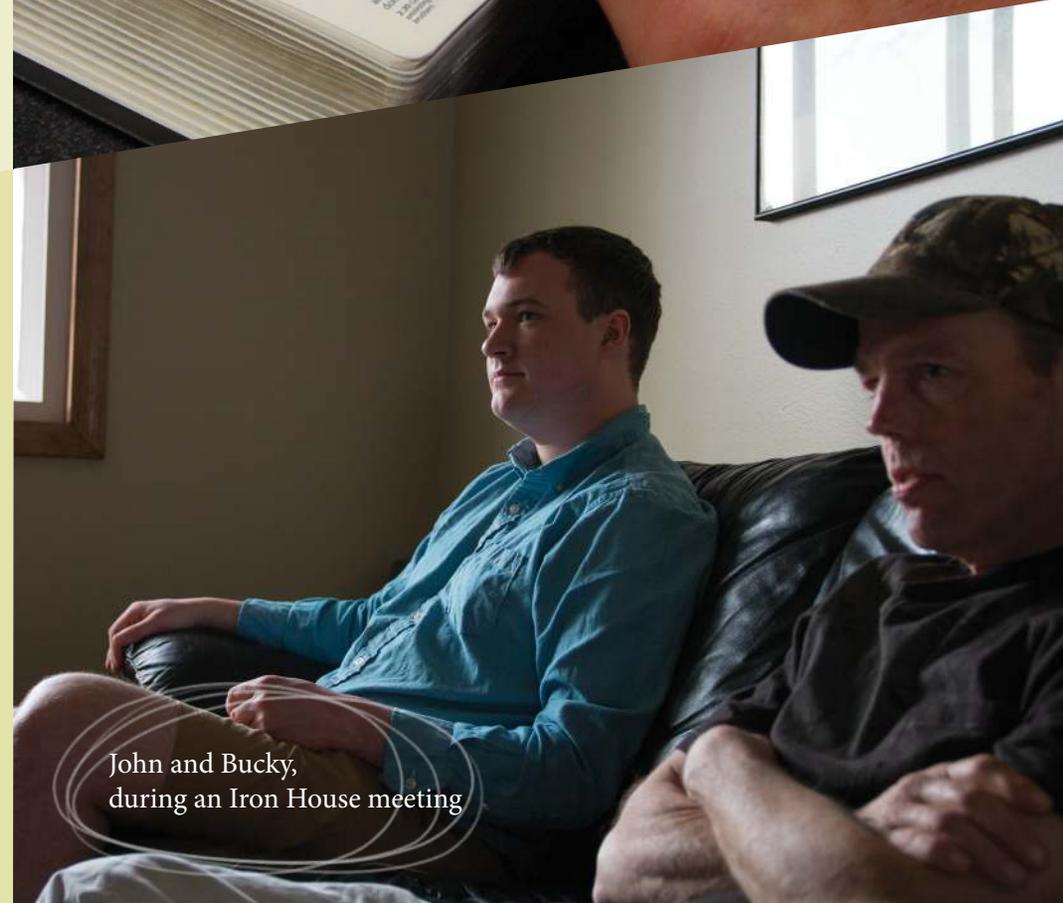
“A lot of different people help fix up these apartments,” says Bucky, former addict and current Iron House resident. “Sometimes we help too.”

Two years ago, Bucky was let go of his job of 10 years at a recycling plant. “Instead of firing me, he asked me to take a voluntary layoff, so it would look better on my work history.” His boss was doing him a favor actually, for Bucky had developed a bad cocaine and crack addiction. Laying him off was probably a generous act. Eventually Bucky’s money ran out and he was put out on the street, where he lived for a year. When he couldn’t afford to smoke crack, he would drink. Friends and family convinced him to get help. A simple Internet search brought up Guiding Light Mission as a viable option.

“When I started the program I didn’t think I’d make it a month. Whenever I voiced a desire to leave, the guys around me would encourage me to stay. They’d say to me, ‘Stick it out for a little while longer.’ I still can’t believe I made it the whole six months.”

After a couple months into his recovery program, he got a job at a local storage place. Since Guiding Light Mission asks residents to save 75% of their income, Bucky was able to save enough money to get back on his feet. “Then toward the end of my six-month program, the staff and other guys started encouraging me to join them at Iron House.”

Four months into his new place, Bucky is still on the right track. “I go to AA five times a week, even though I’m only required to do four. I’ve been through all the ‘12 Steps.’ I go to church every Sunday. I have a full-time job. I can afford rent. I have a phone. I buy my own groceries and I save \$25 from each check. And when my check comes this Friday, I’ll have



John and Bucky,  
during an Iron House meeting

enough money for next month's rent. I'm doing really good! It's easier to go through life with people who understand me and what I've been through."

Bucky is now over one year sober.

## CRAIG

After 23 years of addiction to many drugs, Craig knew he needed to do something different. "I tried all kinds of things, including weening myself off each drug, one at a time. That didn't work."

Growing up in a Christian home, Craig felt a strong connection to the Christian-based principles of Guiding Light Mission. "It just felt like a good fit." For fifteen years, Craig went from couch to couch, staying with friends and burning bridges. After a month of being in Guiding Light Recovery, he heard about Iron House. "I didn't have anywhere else to go, so renting one of those rooms became my ultimate goal." After eight months in the Recovery program, he then moved into Iron House. "I bought a bed before I moved in there and for me, that's a big thing. I go into my room now, and I see my bed that I paid for, and I know I'm going in the right direction. I finally feel stable. I love it."

To keep Iron House completely free of alcohol and drugs, the men there will still have random drug tests and be required to attend meetings. "Sure, we have to do that for accountability, but it doesn't feel like a recovery house. I'm paying rent, I'm working, I have a bathroom and a kitchen that I share with my roommate. It feels really good to finally have my own name on a lease for my own place."

Craig is currently one year sober.

## JOHN

Another resident, John, has been in Iron House for a year now. Before that he did eight months in the Guiding Light Recovery program. "Eight months and one day," he recounts. "I couldn't stop drinking from the ages of 16 to 25. In college, I did drugs and drank a ton, and it put me in the hospital." A suicide attempt two years ago led John to seek help. Luckily, he found Guiding Light Mission. "I was ambivalent about my recovery until

about a month into the program, then I started to have some hope again. The people at the Mission helped me fit back into a sober life and made me realize that I don't need alcohol." After graduating from the recovery program, John moved into Iron House.

Last summer Guiding Light Mission made another bold move to aptly rename its rehab program Guiding Light Recovery. Since drug and alcohol addiction is a common trait among the men that come in, it just made sense to acknowledge it, and unapologetically deal with it head on. As the staff trudged through updating the curriculum, they realized they needed another person to help shape it. Program Director Brian Elve thought of John as a possible candidate. "He sees things differently than most people here. He's very good at communicating and he enjoys helping people. I wasn't sure if he'd even be interested in the job because he already had a job. But I very much wanted to see what someone like him could do to a program like this, to help shape this."

Shortly after moving into Iron House, John became an employee. He is now coming up on two years sober.

## CONTINUING SUCCESS

Iron House has been such a success since it started a year and a half ago, only one person has relapsed on the properties since it started. That number is pretty impressive, given how hard it is to kick serious addictions. Currently, there are fourteen people living in Iron House, with the third apartment house recently renovated. When the apartments are fully occupied, they have the potential to net over \$7,000 a month to help pay for the properties. Granted, this is still considered a newer venture for the Mission. But so far, the results are incredibly obvious to those who see it up close. Indeed, this is what a sustainable recovery can look like, but it's also a brilliant example of a tight-knit community of men who are all supporting each other to live the best lives they possibly can.

For questions about Iron House and Guiding Light Mission Recovery, please call Brian Elve at 616-451-0236, ext. 16.



# SMART CHARITY

At Guiding Light Mission, we're on a constant journey—traveling with men to recovery from addiction and brokenness to health. Like any good guides and leaders, we're constantly looking for a better trail, a safer crossing, as we discover what works and what doesn't.

A guide needs to be trustworthy and can make the difference between life and death. A guide needs to be skilled and knowledgeable, armed with more than just good intentions. A guide needs to bring a wealth of experience, dedication, commitment, and a heart for the journey to see every traveler safely home.

On our journey with many men, we have constantly tried to improve our approach by following the advice of other skilled practitioners and leaders in the movement— to make a real difference when tackling the toughest problems, like dependency on drugs or on handouts.

We do this because our mission is to really help, to really bring change. Our commitment is to use resources wisely and honor God with this ministry and the gifts you provide to make it possible.

Your support is a sacred trust. Your gifts are an investment in helping men help themselves and contribute—working, earning, paying their own way, even paying taxes like the rest of us.

We believe “Smart Charity” focuses on results and not just gestures, and impacts instead of attempts. After all, that is what brings change. This conviction has changed us from a traditional homeless shelter to a dynamic recovery community where most of our men journey to health and a much better life.

Robert D. Lupton is a nationally known expert in charitable giving and a friend of this ministry. He was the keynote speaker at our annual banquet in 2012. In his book *Toxic Charity*, Bob critiques the good intentions that

may actually make things worse and argues for a “Smart Charity”—one that is measured by results, impacts and outcomes.

Over the past few years, we've revamped our approach to helping. We have continued to learn, change and improve with an eye on the final destination. We don't just want to take men off the streets to warehouse them with a dry bed and warm meal. We want to put them into homes, jobs, stable environments and supportive faith communities.

This is a different journey, to a much better destination, than the one that settled for supporting men in their misery. It's tougher, longer and more complex. Stuart Ray, our Executive Director, has stated, “Let's not worry about how long it takes. Let's just focus on getting it right.”

So rather than help hundreds of people whenever they ask for it, we take a clear stance to help those who are serious about complete transformation and healing. This has caused us to rethink everything and re-tool our entire approach, and our results speak for themselves.

**TODAY**, Guiding Light Mission is a leader in getting results in our community. We are no longer a place where someone comes for a bed, just to remain in a cycle of self-destruction. Today we are a community where men come and engage. And in their recovery, they invest in their own healing and life's possibilities.

Our new path is working, and it reflects the changes to which we are committed—to break the cycle of addiction and to support men on their challenging climb to a new life.

Because it's easier to warehouse men than to help them heal, our program has gotten more demanding. It's so much more than a bed and three meals a day. It's a place to start over, work hard, and start building a stable life. And luckily, we've been gratified to receive support from the generous and faithful folks of West Michigan.

When you give to Guiding Light Mission, you're making an investment that will continue to yield dividends that might be hard to imagine.

## LOOK AT THE FACTS:

In the first three months of 2015, we helped 38 men find full-time jobs. But we didn't line up the work for them. We didn't schedule their interviews



Our 3rd Iron House was acquired in Spring of 2015

and we didn't tell them where they should work. We empowered them, assisted them in producing solid resumes, offered a temporary address, bus passes, advice and a chance to clean up. With a little boost, they were able to seek the work themselves. They made their own connections and they took the necessary steps to secure the job and maintain it. This gives them the dignity they so deserve.

But we can only help those who are willing to have us come alongside while they help themselves. A guide does not carry the traveler, only directs. And it is in the walking that men grow strong. Carrying someone only makes them weaker in the long run. And we can only help those for whom we have support.

When you donate to Guiding Light Mission, you're investing in your community in two ways—you are helping remove the problems that come with addiction and dereliction: theft, violence, trafficking. But you're also investing in a positive way, actually adding value into the local economy.

Consider the 38 men that found work in our Back to Work Program in the first three months of 2015. Let's assume each man averages 10 dollars an hour and works full-time. This means they can generate \$790,400 per year for just those 38 men. Assuming we continue helping that many men the rest of the year, they could generate over \$3 million worth of economic activity per year! They're buying groceries, used cars, bikes, food, clothes, and paying taxes in your neighborhood.

The more that our struggling populations can be made stable, the safer our streets are. They're spending money in your neighborhood, and keeping your local economy strong. In fiscal year 2013 alone, our Back to Work program helped 155 men find work, establish savings accounts, and find independent housing. And Guiding Light Recovery saw 48 men graduating into a sober lifestyle and into full-time work. These men are now champions of recovery and role models to those who are struggling with addiction.

By investing in the results of Guiding Light Mission, you're truly investing in your own community. It's hard to find a better place to put your time and treasure than in changing lives that will, in turn, help us all live better lives. We are grateful to God for your faithfulness and look forward to continuing this important and innovative work of helping men transform through the power of Christ.



# introducing **THE JOB POST**

## —Creating Future Stability for the Mission

Not long ago, Executive Director Stuart Ray was spending time with a friend of his who was a retired staffing company owner. After getting caught up on the latest news of Guiding Light Mission, the friend couldn't help but inquire: "You're sending so many men to staffing companies to find jobs. Why don't you start your own and make some money for the Mission?" Mr. Ray was intrigued—the thought never occurred to him.

Mr. Ray entertained the idea and sought more advice on how this might work. Would it be worth the effort to branch out like this? Through some contacts, he was able to meet with Christina Felan, who had many years of staffing company experience. Over the course of learning about the staffing business, Mr. Ray was informed that most of the leading staffing companies in the area were not local companies. Their profits aren't necessarily staying in Michigan. Some are even publicly traded companies, so investors all over the world are earning money from West Michigan workers.

Obviously, staffing companies provide a necessary service to the community, whether they're locally based or not. After all, Guiding Light's Back to Work residents use area staffing companies pretty regularly, as they re-enter the work force.

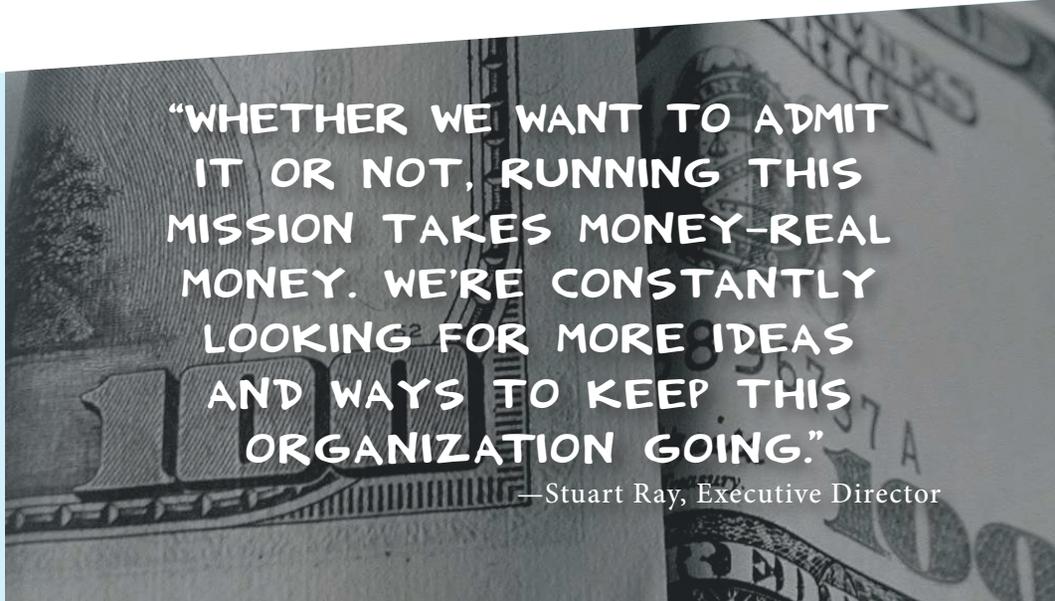
Mr. Ray couldn't help wonder if a staffing company's business model could help fund the programs at Guiding Light Mission. It wouldn't be such a huge stretch outside of normal operations because they were already helping so many men find jobs in the community. Instead of taking credit for it in newsletters and annual reports, the Mission would now be able to earn some income, making it that much more sustainable.

Having the organization sufficiently funded has been Mr. Ray's persistent

goal since he started at Guiding Light Mission. Donors and supporters have been outstanding and very faithful over the years. But complete dependence on donor generosity doesn't address the uncertainty of a constantly fluctuating economy. The economic recession of several years ago left many area non-profits and churches struggling with a serious dip in donations, forcing them to layoff staff and cut services. Having more financially sustainable projects makes Guiding Light Mission that much stronger to weather the next economic crisis.

It was this mode of thinking that helped spawn Iron House, which has become a sustainable renter-funded housing project of the Mission. After the initial investment of three apartment buildings, Iron House is now completely funded each month by the men in recovery who live there. Each renter has gone through the Guiding Light Mission Recovery program and is now working full-time and supporting himself. Other than the initial cost of the apartment buildings, the Mission doesn't *need* to ask donors for monthly Iron House support—it's already being taken care of by the guys that live there.

Thankfully, the current economic climate in West Michigan is the best it's been since December of 2000. Kent County's current unemployment rate is 3.3%. Right now in our area, jobs are everywhere, but finding one that fits specific skills and desires might be more elusive. And likewise, employers are also competing for workers. And that's where The Job Post comes in.



**"WHETHER WE WANT TO ADMIT  
IT OR NOT, RUNNING THIS  
MISSION TAKES MONEY—REAL  
MONEY. WE'RE CONSTANTLY  
LOOKING FOR MORE IDEAS  
AND WAYS TO KEEP THIS  
ORGANIZATION GOING."**

—Stuart Ray, Executive Director

Ultimately, the chats Mr. Ray was having with Christina convinced him this venture was worth trying. She was offered a position at Guiding Light Mission to help develop what this could look like. Christina's job officially started in February. Her task? To use her experience to set it all up and make it happen—from scratch.

“I had to design all the paperwork, write and create a handbook, detail our procedures, develop the application packet, figure out the insurance, client agreements—a lot goes into a startup like this,” says Christina. “I’ve been pretty busy!”

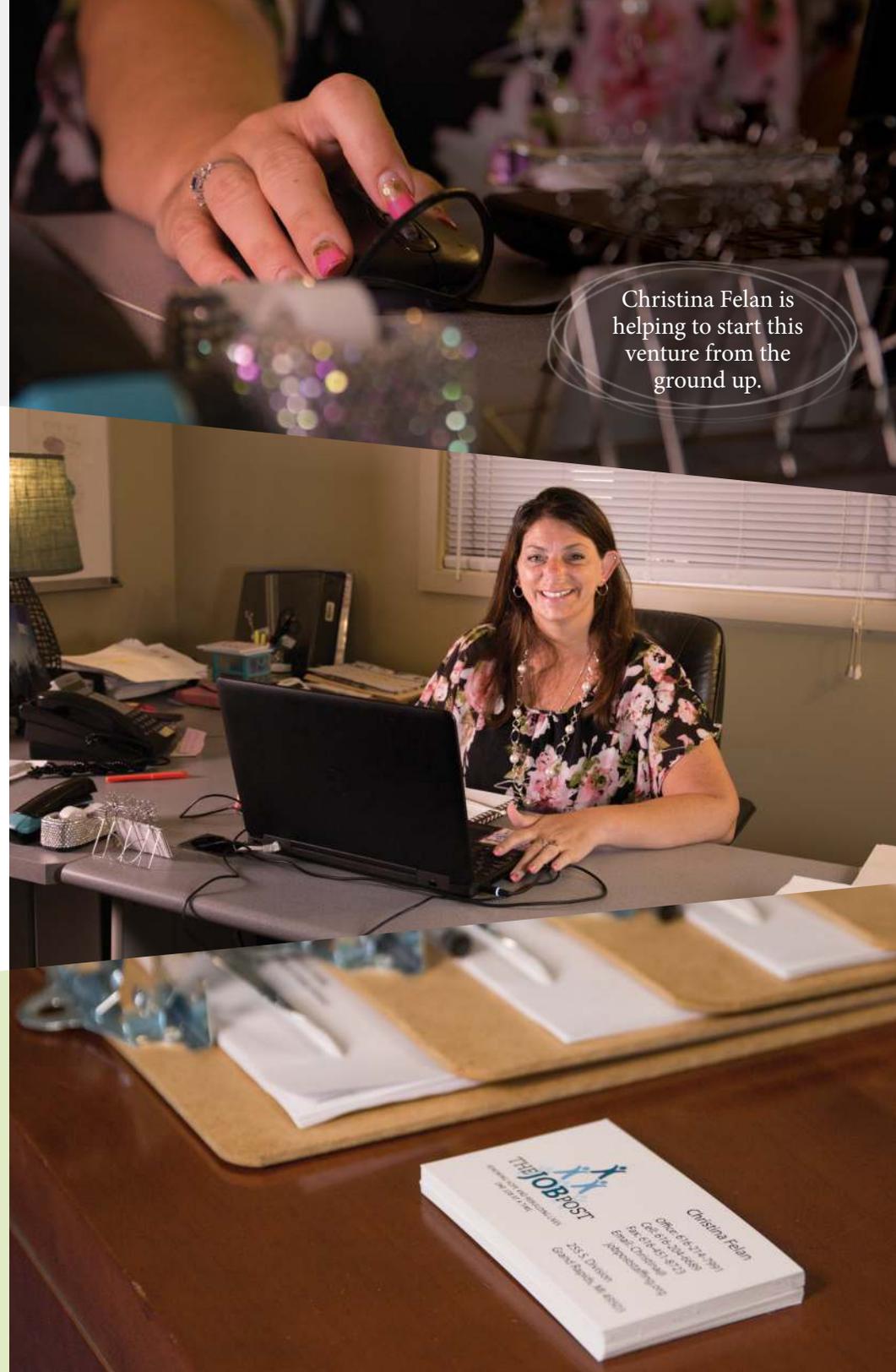
Then in April The Job Post was ready to launch. The announcement was made on social media, Facebook, Craigslist, and even our very own Stuart Ray got on the eightWest television show and talked about it. Articles showed up in the Grand Rapids Press, the Grand Rapids Business Journal, and Rapid Growth Media. A month later over 160 multi-page applications were filled out by job seekers.

Each day, Christina is meeting and talking with people, some of whom are having a hard time finding work. Others *have* work, but are looking for something different. Applications are collected, interviews are given, and background checks are made.

Some people come in with little work experience, and Christina can work with that. For many years, Guiding Light has had leads to employers who will hire people who need a second chance. “But we don’t want to limit ourselves. We don’t want to shut ourselves off from any industry,” says Christina. “This is already shaping up to be a place where people who are looking for a change in their technical field can come to find something different—maybe more challenging.”

Staffing companies typically operate by billing out contracted workers for a commission. It’s a small margin for each person, but having hundreds of contracted workers means the staffing company can succeed. Ideally, this will add up to non-profit sustainability. “This is definitely thinking outside the box,” Christina says. “Our profits won’t go to the top—instead they’ll go to battling addiction and getting men off the street.” The hope of this venture is to make Guiding Light Mission more sustainable, to maybe even increase our services and help more men find health and recovery.

Christina’s communication with employers is non-stop. Several times a



Christina Felan is helping to start this venture from the ground up.



Ian was employee #2.  
“Go Ian!!”

week, Christina is driving to area companies, meeting with employers, having coffee, and pitching the vision—passionately explaining the benefits this could have on the community. “Butterball signed up, North Club and even some churches signed up.” And bigger companies are signing on, too. Some companies, in anticipation for the holidays, committed to hiring hundreds of workers. “For being so new, we’re doing really well! Business owners and area companies are really responding to us!”

While The Job Post is the brainchild of the folks at Guiding Light Mission, it will have its own branding, address and vision. Christina has already hired an assistant, Ian, and more employees are certain to come on board.

Right now, The Job Post is currently staffing manufacturing, light industrial, general labor, clerical and administrative. The next level, likely in 2016, will be staffing for engineering and the medical field, which most people know, is a growing industry in Grand Rapids.

For the last several years, Guiding Light Mission has aimed to be less of a typical mission, and more of a “transformation organization.” The Job Post and Guiding Light Mission are poised to be key players in connecting people with employers and aiding those who desperately crave transformation. Taking these guys in costs money. But when they’re healthy, working, and back in society, they’re putting money back into the local economy. They’re paying taxes, and paying for their own groceries and transportation. It’s going back into the system—back into our communities. Together, we can make West Michigan a prime place for people to not only work, but to also have a safe and fulfilling life. The idea that “Guiding Light Mission works” is truly becoming a literal statement. This is a win-win for everybody.

Applicants are encouraged to apply in person. Please call Christina at 616-214-7991 for information.



# Social: Enterprise

Think of this iconic image: a simple cardboard box, opened by an appreciative farmer—containing a small shovel, some seed packs and a few essentials. The box was printed with the word “CARE” and it was America’s helping hand to Europe after WWII. “CARE packages” started with food rations, gardening supplies, and then even school supplies for kids. It was largely a symbolic gesture, but it was also an urgent response to meet immediate needs. But everyone knew that sustained recovery would require a jump-start in production, unleashing the potential that had been sidelined in the devastation of the conflict.



CARE packages from the US to Europe after World War II.

“What is it?”  
“What does it mean?”  
“Why should I know about it?”

For a long time, folks have tried to figure out the best way to give help. Different situations call for different responses. Different problems have different stages: survival comes first—water, food, shelter, clothing, and so on. After that, higher goals are addressed: recovery and restoration efforts replace immediate relief. It is understood that jobs are the ultimate engine of prosperity; eventually people must get back to work.

Helping tough social problems, like addiction and entrenched poverty, require smart approaches, a bit like Europe’s Marshall Plan after WWII. You can throw money at anything, but you won’t always accomplish your goal. You might even make things worse by limiting responses and feeding dependence. You can create unintended consequences.

“Social enterprise” is a smart approach to solving hard problems. Instead of simple, direct efforts—like charity—it tries to understand the problems, their dynamics, and address them, aiming for better outcomes. This approach creates sustainable effective solutions that do more than address symptoms. They cure underlying issues.

Probably the most iconic example of social enterprise was a micro-loan system created by Mohammad Yunus, founder of the Grameen Bank of Bangladesh. Yunus proved that poor people were good credit risks and then broke the system of exorbitant interest that kept them from accessing the loans they needed to compete. He started by lending \$27 to 43 poor women from the village of Jobra, allowing them to generate enough income to be independent, no longer begging to survive. Some were able to stock a sidewalk cart with goods, and some were able to buy a sewing machine. These simple steps were enough to make a living and grow their respective businesses. Almost all of the women were able to repay their loans.

The repaid loans were then re-invested in the next group of individuals who were ready to start and run their own business. This revolving credit helped build what is now an international network of microeconomic development.

Because of Yunus' work, "social enterprise" is a new buzz phrase, but a lot of folks are still confused about what it actually means, and how it might apply to their own lives. Broadly, it includes all efforts intended to produce positive social impact, drive social change and be transformational. Social entrepreneurship is often the driving force behind the enterprise.

"Social" refers to the targeted sector, the field affected by this effort—making lives better in some way, with goods or services that benefit the person and the society as a whole.

"Entrepreneurship" is trickier because it suggests doing things in a new, innovative or better way. The entrepreneur creates value, thinks outside of the box, innovates ways to build a better mousetrap in a better way. A *social* entrepreneur revisits the whole question of *why* the mousetrap is needed in the first place—to discover other solutions instead of settling on treating chronic symptoms with tired methods.

Some see entrepreneurs as people who want to get rich producing the mousetraps. Others see them as valuable producers of a necessary product that makes life better. Thank goodness for those cheap little mousetraps!

Many non-profit groups, like charities and missions, are turning to income-generating efforts to help sustain their operations. They look for opportunities that fit with their mission and serve by adding value in a different way. For example, creating a food co-op that sells members a variety of foods at discounted prices provides an accessible market to the under-served and reduces food waste. The co-op members retain dignity by having more food choices at a price they can afford to pay. This is one example of an enterprising social organization with "win-win" thinking.

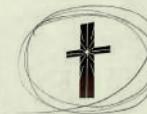
Another form of social enterprise involves coming up with new solutions to old social problems. For instance, creating transitional housing and wrap-around services that help people re-enter society. When a non-profit invests in properties to provide much needed affordable housing, it serves its mission *and* the greater challenge of taking its clients through the next step to success.

Social entrepreneurship blends the American business model of meeting needs in exchange for revenue *and* the American commitment to compassionate care by dealing with tough problems. Frankly, it's smarter than just charity. Social entrepreneurs also root out causes to eliminate secondary traps—such as someone not being able to find affordable housing, even though he's clean, sober and working.

As Europe repaired itself during the aftermath of WWII, the donated CARE packages evolved to meet the more prudent needs of the affected folks. When the danger of hunger was no longer a threat, CARE packages would contain blankets, clothes, tools and even knitting supplies. Eventually the CARE packages stopped in 1967, when it was deemed that Europe could function in a sustainable manner. There was never any intent to feed and care for those countries indefinitely through these cardboard boxes. It was only to help them get back on their feet again.

Those who practice social enterprise are always brainstorming, experimenting, and trying new ways to tackle the problems of this age. They do their best to create win-win-win enterprises that can stand as ideal business models in their own right. The value of these mutually beneficial projects cannot be calculated in dividend checks alone. Lives are changed, human dignity is restored and families and communities are stronger.

There is a time and a place for charity. And a time and a place for investment. In a world with many, many needs, generosity with discernment—firm but loving—is the ultimate goal. It takes Godly wisdom to better understand the evolving role of helping the hurting in the community.



*Is there a way that you are practicing Social Entrepreneurship? Are you helping to solve society problems by empowering individuals? We'd love to hear about it! Please email us at [info@lifeonthestreet.org](mailto:info@lifeonthestreet.org)*

# LEAVING IRON HOUSE

In the Fall of 2015, 29-year old Ross celebrated two years of sobriety. He spent nine months in Guiding Light Mission Recovery battling his addictions, then spent another 13 months renting a room at Iron House, Guiding Light's sober community. It's an emotional moment for Ross as he moves from the safety of Iron House into his own apartment.

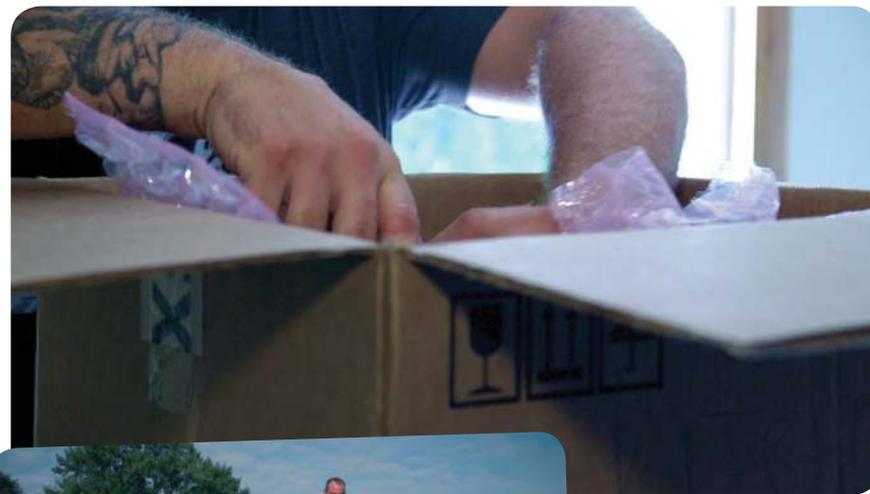
"I'm grateful to Guiding Light Mission for taking me when I was down and out. They worked with me and held me accountable. They gave me a lot of tools on how best to live."

Ross made a lot of friends at Guiding Light Mission and Iron House. So leaving this place is bittersweet. He was comfortable here—he really liked living with the guys who also went through the recovery program. But he also knows he can't stay in transitional housing forever. So he made the empowering decision to live on his own—to rent his own place. "This way, someone else who needs it can rent the room," he says.

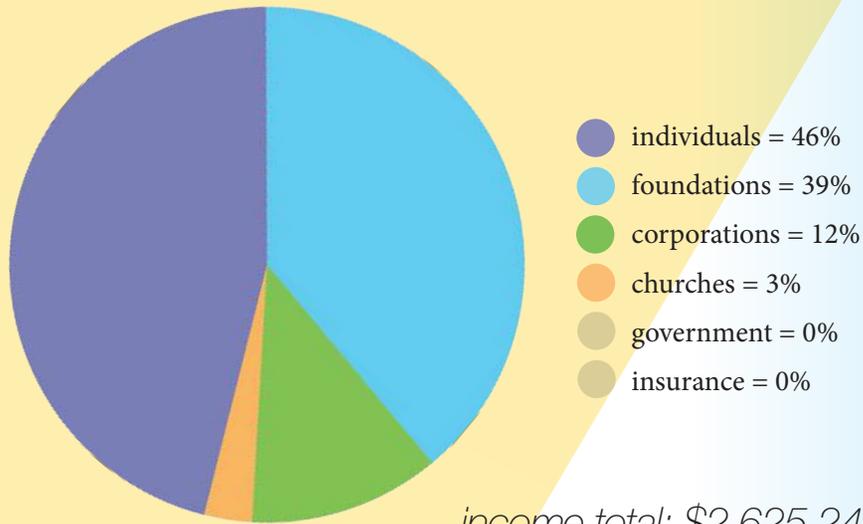
As Ross gives the grand tour of his new one-bedroom apartment, his excitement shows through. He's proud of the new microwave and toaster he just bought. "This place isn't bad!" he says with a grin on his face.

Not bad at all, Ross. Not bad at all. We're proud of you, buddy!

To learn more about Ross' story, check out the video of his testimony on the Guiding Light Mission website at [www.lifeonthestreet.org](http://www.lifeonthestreet.org). Watch the website for the upcoming follow-up video!



## REVENUE SOURCES: WHERE OUR MONEY COMES FROM:



income total: \$2,625,246

Guiding Light appreciates each and every contribution. As a faith-based organization, we have chosen not to accept government funding or health insurance. Our sole source of income is from individual donations. Our program services are free of charge to every man who is ready to take the first steps towards recovery and re-engagement. We are committed to serving God and our program participants with the utmost integrity and all of our stakeholders with full transparency. We make good stewardship a priority to honor God and the hearts of our donors.

## HELPING GUIDING LIGHT MISSION IS AN INVESTMENT IN YOUR COMMUNITY!

Helping men get back on their feet helps the economy! When we put men back to work, they're paying taxes, buying local groceries, and paying for their own housing and transportation. We don't charge money for our services, so we rely on the community to help us remain strong. With your help we can be that last remaining hope for a man who might have lost everything.

## WE HELP MEN FIND STABILITY THROUGH RE-ENGAGEMENT!

Many of the men who graduate from the Guiding Light Recovery and Back to Work programs will credit Guiding Light Mission for their successful re-engagement with the community. We encourage steady work, saving money, and making healthy choices. Most men grow in their spiritual development and worship with faith communities.

## "YES, I WANT TO INVEST IN MEN BECOMING HEALTHY AND SELF-SUFFICIENT."

Please consider donating any amount you can to help make this our best year ever! As always, Guiding Light Mission is a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organization. Gifts are tax deductible as allowed by law.

Please mail donations to:  
255 S. Division Ave, Grand Rapids, MI 49503  
or donate online at [lifeonthestreet.org](http://lifeonthestreet.org)



# OUR MISSION STATEMENT:

*Through the guiding light of God's Spirit, Guiding Light Mission partners with individuals to fulfill their God-given potential through rescue, recovery and re-engagement in community.*

GUIDING LIGHT MISSION  
255 S. DIVISION AVE  
GRAND RAPIDS, MI 49503

ph: 616-451-0236

[lifeonthestreet.org](http://lifeonthestreet.org)

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